(c) by when the benefit of rebate on these taxes would be provided?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (c) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Steps to curb inflation

2415. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the rate of inflation as on 31 st March, for the last three years;

(b) whether the prices of essential commodities like cereals, pulses, edible oils and vegetables continues to soar due to inflation and as a result general public are severely affected;

(c) if so, the details of increase in prices of these commoditie along with the percentage of increase during the last three years, commodity-wise; and

(d) the steps proposed to be taken by Government to contain price rise of these essential commodities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (d) The inflation measured in terms of Wholesale Price Index (WPI) for all commodities and essential commodities like cereals, pulses, edible oils and vegetables are indicated in Table I.

Table I: Year-on-year inflation rates in March (%)

Average of weeks	All commodities	Cereals	Pulses	Vegetables	Edible oils
March, 2006	3.9	5.6	28.7	4.9	-3.5
March, 2007	6.6	7.4	15.3	25.1	**13.8**
March, 2008 P	6.4	6.3	-3.0	9.2	**18.7**

P: Provisional

Containment of inflation remains high on the agenda of the Government. Anti-inflationary policies of the Government include strict fiscal discipline, rationalization of duties of essential items, effective supply-demand management of essential commodities through liberal tariff and trade policies and procurement by public agencies. The Monetary policy of Reserve Bank of India, while being conducive to economic growth, has also attempted to contain inflationary expectations arising out of uncertainties in domestic and international environment.

Merging of ICICI bank with foreign company

†2416. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether ICICI Bank has been merged with any foreign company;

(b) the percentage of Bank's share after the merger;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) whether debentures have been issued by the Bank; and

(d) if so, the worth of debentures in crores, issued in the market?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL):

(a) ICICI Bank Ltd. has not been merged with any foreign company.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) and (d) As on 31st March, 2008, ICICI Bank Ltd. has outstanding debentures of Rs. 19017.28 crore.

Anomalies in pay scales recommended by the Fifth Central Pay Commission

t2417. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:'

(a) Whether it is a fact that there were anomalies in the pay scales of several Departments including BSNL, as recommended by the Fifth Central Pay Commission;

(b) if so, whether these anomalies were removed; and

(c) the precautions being taken to prevent such anomalies in the pay scales as recommended by the Sixth Central Pay Commission?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUAMR BANSAL): (a) and (b) After the submission of the Report of the Fifth Central Pay Commission, an agreement was reached with the staff side as to what was to constitute an anomaly on account of recommendations of the Fifth Central Pay Commission. All the anomalies covered under this defination were processed through the Anomalies Committee at the National Level and the Departmental level. Certain anomalies, on which final decisions could not be taken before setting up of the Sixth Central Pay Commission, were also brought to the notice of that Commission.

(c) The Report of the Sixth Central Pay Commission has recently been submitted to the Government. A new system of running pay bands and grade pay has been recommended by the Commission. It has been indicated by the Pay Commission in para 1.2.20 of their report that as a result of introudction of the proposed system of running pay bands and grade pay, a large number of these anomalies would be automatically settled.

Provision of loans at cheaper interest rates for SC/ST youths

† 2418. SHRI KRISHAN LAL BALMIKI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) youths are being provided loan at cheaper interest rates and without any guarantee to begin their business; and

(b) if so, the details of business which the youths of these Castes and Tribes were provided loans at cheaper interest rates during the last three years?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.